

Housing Committee

Public Hearing on H.B. 6461 March 1, 2011

Written Testimony of:
Mary Ellen Kuraska
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Ladies and Gentlemen of the Housing Committee: My name is Mary Ellen Kuraska. I am currently a commissioner with Enfield Housing Authority where I have served as for the past two years. Prior to my retirement I was employed by the authority for 25 years and where I rose to the position of Executive Director. I oppose House Bill 6461.

Over the years, I have had the pleasure of working both for and on Boards that included several different tenant commissioners. During this time, more than one tenant commissioner had served as Chairman.

Our Town Council has done a good job at appointing well-qualified individuals to the Board. Those appointed as tenant commissioners have well represented the interests of all tenants.

The tenant commissioners have always been appointed in the same manner that I have. They expressed their interest and provided their qualifications to the Town Council. The Council was then able to make the decision as to who they believed would be the best to serve the community. It is my opinion that the system works well.

Changing the system to a tenant organization appointment process could be problematic where popularity is placed ahead of qualifications. This raises a concern that local elected officials will lose the authority to make an important appointment and ability to removal if warranted. I am also concerned about the additional unfunded mandate that will be a burden on local housing authorities and the potential for conflicts of interest.

It would seem to me that this legislation, while it appears to be minor, could have serious unintended consequences. I imagine that the Legislature has more pressing issues to contend with this session.

With consideration to the above, I urge the Housing Committee to oppose H.B. 6461.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Ellen Kuraska